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THE DIRGE OF COHELETH.

IN an essay entitled *The Dirge of Coheleth in Ecclesiastes XII. Discussed and Literally Interpreted*, written in 1873, I proposed a literal rendering or explanation of certain verses which are usually taken "anatomically," the expressions in them being supposed to allude to the several members of the human body in its decrepitude. Shortly after its publication (1874) the essay was discussed by Delitzsch¹ in his *Kohelet*; and I have to thank Dr. Cheyne for calling attention to it in his *Job and Solomon*, although (in an attempt to describe it briefly) he has very completely misrepresented it, his statement of my "dirge-theory" being contained in the foot-note, *Namely, that vv. 3-5 are cited from an authorised book of dirges (comp. 2 Chron. xxxv. 25). There seems, however, no assignable reason for separating these verses from the context. And how can the supposed mourners have sung the latter part of ver. 5? How indeed? Before reading this note I had never imagined that any one could think of the mourners going about the streets singing, "The mourners go about the streets." The writer has mistaken for an enunciation of the dirge-theory a clause of the casual remark appended to my prefatory sketch of it, "The whole passage may allude, etc., or may have been cited from an authorised book of Dirges," &c.*

The dirge-theory is simply that what precedes "Because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about in the streets" does when literally interpreted constitute a short poem suited to the occasion; and if other interpreters maintain that the passage as they interpret it is no less poetical and suited to the occasion, all

¹ It was also reviewed by Kuenen. See *THE JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, vol. iv., p. 478.

that is distinctive of my theory is that the passage should be *literally* interpreted. If when its details have been fully looked into, the theory should be found to be an impracticable one, it would then have to be abandoned; but I do not know of any good reason for its abandonment as a theory and without examination in detail. The verses to be discussed (Eccl. xii. 1-7), run as follows in the Authorised Version :

“ 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth :

“ WHILE the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

“ 2. WHILE the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain ;

“ 3. *In the day when* the keepers of the HOUSE shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few [*margin.* the grinders fail because they grind little], and those that look out of the windows be darkened ;

“ 4. And the doors shall be shut in the STREETS, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low ;

“ 5. *Also when* they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail : *because man goeth to his long HOME, and the mourners go about the STREETS :*

“ 6. OR EVER the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern.

“ 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Dr. Cheyne writes in *Job and Solomon*, “ We have now arrived at the conclusion of the meditations of our much-tried thinker. It is strongly poetic in colouring ; but when we compare it with the grandly simple overture of the book (i. 4-8), can we help confessing to a certain degree of disappointment? It is the allegory which spoils it for modern readers, and so completely spoils it that attempts have been made to expel the allegorical element altogether.’ But what has led to these attempts to expel it is, perhaps not so much a distaste for the allegory in itself as the

repeated and egregious failures of these interpreters to work out their theory consistently and in agreement with one another. An anatomist who is true to a form of the Rabbinic exposition is considered by one of a different persuasion to have "a critical nose degenerating into a hog's snout." Delitzsch introduces his own form of the allegory, on which something will be said in the latter part of this article, with the remark that previous anatomies have been failures, "Die bisherigen Deutungsversuche sind freilich ganz oder meistens verunglückt." Herzfeld goes further and writes, "Zum Schlusse dieser poetischen Beschreibung des Alters und des Todes bemerke ich noch, dass, wenn wir an ihr keine durchgeführte Allegorie, sondern ein von der unbildlichen Redeweise mehrfach durchgebrochenes Aggregat unvollständiger Vergleichen haben, dieses Verfahren nicht vorzugsweise unserem Verfasser, sondern fast allen biblischen Schriftstellern mehr oder weniger eigen ist." On this I shall have something more to say presently. In the *Dirge* I remarked upon it that the fault was not with the Preacher but with his interpreters, who had mistaken a דרש for a פשט, a piece of Midrash for a primary rendering.

The mass of readers are disposed to adopt the anatomical view of the passage because they imagine that it has the decisive support of Jewish tradition. Then it is observed that some expressions in it, as that *the grinders cease*, are easily and attractively accounted for by the theory; and this is forthwith accepted as sufficiently probable, the less tractable details being left as puzzles for the critics. But the anatomical rendering belongs to the *Haggadah* literature (in the popular sense of the term), and in this we do not look for the simple or primary sense of Scripture; and, conversely, when the *Haggadah* gives us an allegorical interpretation, it does not thereby lay down that the passage so interpreted has no פשט, or literal sense. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it and besieged it, and built

great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." The little city, to speak in modern phrase, was John Bunyan's city of *Mansoul*: the poor wise man was the good יצר or ἐπιθυμία or principle: the *great* king was the evil יצר, which is congenital, and is therefore thirteen years *senior* to the good principle in man, the birth of which dates from the day when he becomes a son of the Torah. When it has been proved that the author of this pretty little parable was of opinion that Eccl. ix. 13-15 has no פשט, and that the writer of the book did not mean these verses to be taken in their obvious sense, then, and not till then, I shall be ready to grant that the ingenious originator of the anatomical explanation of Eccl. xii. 1-7 may have denied the possibility of a literal interpretation of the passage. Meanwhile (without in the first instance criticising the renderings of anatomists) I will give over again, with one or two improvements, some of my reasons for thinking that the passage taken literally is not devoid of meaning.

The first thing to be noticed is its structure. It has for preface, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; after which come three sections beginning with the same phrase, עד אשר לא, *while as yet not*. In the *Dirge* (p. 2) I wrote ERE ERE ERE. The A.V. has "While," "Or ever," at the beginnings of the three sections, and the R.V., "Or ever," in each case. In the first section of the three there is a simply expressed premonition of the "evil days," when youth, with its health, strength, and joyousness, will have departed. The third section begins with figures of dissolution, "Or ever the golden bowl or the pitcher be broken," etc., and ends literally, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The longer intermediate section begins with familiar Biblical images, "While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain,"

and ends literally, "Because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." The question to be answered is, Where in this second section is the point of transition from figurative to literal expression? and everything depends upon the answer which we give to that question.

The obvious point of transition, if Biblical usage is to be allowed to decide, is at the words *In the day when* (ver. 3). The figure of the darkening of the heavens is at once followed by its explanation. Compare Isaiah xxx. 26, where the same formula of transition from the figurative to the literal is used, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, *in the day that* the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." A simple "when" takes the place of "in the day that" in Ezek. xxxii. 7-10, "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. I will also vex the hearts of many people, *when* I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. Yea, I will make many peoples amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall." Here it is to be remarked that the person addressed, Pharaoh (ver. 2), is not warned simply of his own coming destruction, but of the impression which this will make upon "many peoples." It might be said that their feelings would not be of any interest to him then; nevertheless, the prophet, in apostrophising him, makes a point of foretelling how others will be affected by his fall. Returning now to Eccl. xii. 2-5, we may say that in accordance with the parallels just cited, all that comes between the formula

of transition *In the day when* (ver. 3), and the concluding words of the section *because man goeth*, etc., should be capable of interpretation as a literal description of what happens on the occasion when "the mourners go about the streets." The word *Also* (גם) divides what we have now to interpret in detail into subsections, consisting of verses 3 and 4, and verse 5 respectively.

Verse 3. Passing over the introductory 'ביום ש', *In the day when*, we have remaining a description of the inmates of a house or palace, whose lord is lying dead in it on that day,

וְזַעַר שְׂמָרֵי הַבַּיִת
 וְהַתְּעֹזֹתַי אֲנָשֵׁי הַחַיִל
 וּבְמִלֵּי הַטְּחִנּוֹת כִּי מְעַט
 וְהַשְׂכָּוִי הַרְאֹת בְּאַרְבּוֹת :

The keepers of the house are men-servants, the men of חיל those of higher rank; the grinders (fem.) are maid-servants, who prepare food; the gazers at the lattices are the ladies of the house. Men and women of the lower and the higher degree respectively are mentioned in this order in Psalm cxxiii. 2, "As the eyes of *servants* look unto the hand of their *masters*, and as the eyes of a *maiden* unto the hand of her *mistress*," etc.; and Isaiah xxiv. 2, "As with the *servant*, so with his *master*; as with the *maid*, so with her *mistress*."

The grinding-maids "cease" from work because "they grind little" (A.V. marg.), or have little work to do, at a time when there are no festivities. This rendering implies that מְעַט is transitive, and means *מעטו את המחינה*, which is in accordance with the facts—(1) that the *piel* of מעט (which is found here only in the Bible) is much used and *is transitive* in the later Hebrew; and (2) that Ecclesiastes, as all critics allow, approximates in its diction to the later Hebrew. It is to be noticed that the grinding-maids merely *cease* from work because none remains to be done,

the word **בטלי** not meaning that they are past work or have suffered injury.

On my rendering of the next clause Delitzsch has the remark, "Die Fensterguckerinnen sollen die *ladies* sein, die sich gern am Fenster amüsiren, und die nun verdunkelt sind. Gibt es etwas Komischeres als solche (ob äusserlich oder innerlich, bleibt unbestimmt) finster gewordene Dämchen?" I will therefore repeat some of the illustrations which I gave in support of the view that the clause refers to the ladies of the house: Jud. v. 28, 29, "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window. . . . Her wise ladies answered her," etc.; 2 Sam. vi. 16, "Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window," etc.; Jer. ix. 20, 21, "Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye *women*, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. For death is come up *into our windows*, and is entered into our palaces." "This passage (I remarked) has not always been rationally explained. . . . If the windows were places of pleasant concourse, there would be no lack of significance in the coming in of death at the windows. The idea would be like that of its appearance in the theatre or the ball-room; and we have no need of such far-fetched explanations as," etc. When we notice that *ladies* are addressed in the passage cited (ver. 20), and that it had been said in verse 17, "Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come, and send for cunning women, that they may come," we see in the words of Jeremiah a striking parallel to the dirge-passage in Eccl. xii., with its death in a palace, and its professional mourners, and the gloom that has fallen upon the ladies at the lattices. I do not think it very important to decide in what sense they "sit in darkness" (Mic. vii. 8); but if the windows were closed (*Dirge*, p. 73) for the occasion, that would have been no more unnatural than it is now to draw down blinds and shut shutters at the time of a funeral. I am told that it is a more or less prevalent Jewish custom even to cover up

mirrors as a sign of mourning. On the other hand, compare Eccl. v. 17, "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness."

Verse 4. This verse (with לקול for לקול) runs thus:—

וְסָגְרוּ דְלָתַיִם בְּשׂוּק
 בְּשֹׁפֵל קוֹל הַטְּחֻנָּה
 וְיָקוּם לְקוֹל הַצֶּפּוּר
 : וַיִּשְׁחֹף כָּל-בְּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר :

The grinders cease (ver. 3), the sound of the mill falls, and concurrently with this "the doors are shut to the street." The symbolism of the closed door is obvious: it means the exclusion of visitors, whom the דלתים (dual), the great double street-door, is not open to receive on the days of mourning; as it is said in Isaiah xxiv. 10, 11, "Every house is shut up, that no man may come in . . . all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone." The open door is expressive of hospitality, as in Job xxxi. 32, "The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller [*marg. way*]." When visitors are not received, there is little food to be prepared, and little grinding therefore to be done. The "voice of the mill" accordingly falls, as in Jer. xxv. 10, 11, "Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, *the voice of the millstones*, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation."

The Midrash on Ecclesiastes xii. and in the Introduction to *Echah*, even while it allegorises, testifies to the truth of this as the primary rendering of the hemistich 4 *a*. The doors shut to the street are (it says) *the doors of Nehushta the daughter*¹ of Elnathan [2 Kings xxiv. 8], *which were wont to be wide open*. Compare the precept in *Aboth* I. 5 (p. 185 in the *Authorised Daily Prayer Book*), "Let thy house be open

¹ The reading *daughter* (בת for בית or בר) of Elnathan is suggested by Loria on the Introduction to *Echah*, § 23.

wide; let the poor be the members of thy household." Thus the closed door in the dirge-passage is taken by the Midrash in its primary sense, as signifying the exclusion of persons who used to enter by it.

In the Midrash, in explanation of the falling of the sound of the mill, it is said, "they *ceased from*, or did not occupy themselves in, words of Torah." Israel are like "the grinders" (ver. 3); these work at all hours, and so Israel cease not from the Torah day or night, for it is said *והגית בו יומם ולילה*. Of "the grinders" it is also said that they are *the great Mishnaioth as of R. Akiba*, etc., and on *כי מעטו*, "that is the *talmud* contained in them." They *diminished* or *worked little* at this, so that the "seers were darkened," not one of them being able to remember his *talmud*. In this we have a homiletical application of the dirge-passage with its literal sense presupposed: the mill of the Eastern household and the grinding women with their incessant toil are brought vividly before us, and by a simple and customary transition the Darshan passes from material bread, or corn, to the "true bread" of the Torah. It will, perhaps, be granted that he had no thought of attributing all this to the Preacher himself, and when the *דרש* or application is taken away, the residuum consists of literal exegesis of expressions in the dirge-passage.

The bird. Taken by itself the first clause of the hemistich 4 b, *ויקום לקול הצפור*, seems to mean, "And he shall arise at the voice of the bird." But the following clause, "And all the daughters of song shall be brought low," suggests that "the bird" is the subject of *יקום*, and that this creature rises into voice or audibility when the sound of music is brought low. Illustrative examples of *קום* followed by *ל* and *ל* were given in the *Dirge*. Delitzsch having objected that the meaning "erhebt sich zu Geschrei" would require the pointing *ויקום לקול*, I was led to consider the effect of this slight change, and found that it very much improved the rhythm of the verse, which it made to

consist of four equal seven-syllable lines. Verse 5, as we shall see, has a no less pronounced metrical character ; and verse 3, if we take the poetic licence of not counting Sh'vas and the conjunction ׀, consists very nearly of equal eight-syllable lines, the third of which is a little longer than the other three, but may be lightened by reading *כִּי מַעְטִי* shortly as one word. In the *Preface* I paraphrased the clause "but the bird of evil omen raises his dirge." This, taken in the stricter sense, implies that the bird's voice tells of impending calamity ; and it is remarkable that the Midrash also, in a way peculiar to itself, arrives at that meaning of the voice. The clause (it says) refers to Nebuchadnezzar. For eighteen years *bath kol* was heard by him in his palace, sounding like a bird (*מצפצפת*), commanding him to go up and destroy the house of God : and all the daughters of song were brought low, for he went up, and made song to cease from the house of feasting, as it is said, *With song they shall not drink wine* (Isaiah xxiv. 9). Here, again, we have the sense of the dirge-theory : the *house* (ver. 3) was *בֵּית הַמִּשְׁכָּה*, but now its songs are hushed. Some of these expressions are from *Midr. Eccl.* and some from *Midr. Echah.*

The idea that the voice of a bird may be ominous is akin to what is said in Eccl. x. 20, "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought ; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber : for *a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*" But the phrase "of evil omen" may be taken rhetorically and with some latitude, the essential fact being that screeching bird-sounds in the Bible are concomitants of mourning and desolation, as in Job xxx. 29, 31, "I am . . . a companion to owls. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep"; Zeph. ii. 14, "The cormorant and the bittern [R.V., the pelican and the porcupine] shall lodge in the upper lintels of it ; their voice shall sing in the windows ; desolation shall be in the thresholds." Some critics (I suggested) had been led

astray by the prophet's *ישורר*, *sing*, which he only uses because it does *not* properly apply to birds and beasts. The windows being again singled out as the natural centres of gaiety, it is as if it were said that in the time of desolation their only music should be the doleful cries of screeching birds.

The dirge-passage is strikingly illustrated by the New Testament, where we read in Rev. xviii. :—

“2. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine. 9-10. *And the kings of the earth shall lament for her*, saying, Alas, alas, etc.; 11-13. And the merchants of the earth shall weep *and mourn over her*; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of cinnamon, and spice, and incense (R.V.), etc.; 22. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee *and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee*; 23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.”

Here we have a mourning for the dead, with all the features of the first subsection of the dirge-passage: the birds in place of the daughters of song, the end of busy life with its feasting and the “voice of the millstone,” the extinction of light and joy. And in the cessation of the merchandise of cinnamon, and spice, etc., we have something not unlike what we shall find in the remaining subsection, which we have now to consider.

Verse 5. Detaching the introductory *גם*, *also*, and writing *וְיִצְאֶה* for the anomalous *וְיִצְאֵה*, we have the five equal lines, of two words and six syllables,

מִגְבֹּהַּ יִרְאוּ

וְחִתְחִתִּים בְּדֶרֶךְ

וַיִּפְאֵץ הַשָּׂקֵד
 וַיִּסְתַּמְּל הַקְּהָב
 וַתִּפֹּר הָאֲבִיזָה :

And the verse ends with the Preacher's reason for thus writing, "because the man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

The scene has changed from the house to the garden, the almond, the locust and the caperberry being outdoor objects. The meaning of the first two lines is (I should say) obviously, they have a fear of something as from above or from the ground at their feet, as it is said, "Terrors shall make him afraid *on every side*" (Job xviii. 11).

The remaining three lines are of somewhat doubtful meaning; and we shall resort again to the principle of parallelism in attempting to explain them.

Beginning with what is plain, we read that the *caperberry* shall *fail*, namely, to produce its appetising effect. The preceding verb "be a burden," or drag heavily, whatever it means precisely, has at any rate a bad sense, like the following "fail," and we infer that the parallel וַיִּפְאֵץ has likewise a bad sense. Accordingly we take it to be from פָּאֵץ , to *despise* or *spurn*, and read (with a slight change of pointing) וַיִּפְאֵץ (for וַיִּפְאֵץ). This happily mends the rhythm of the verse, and gives us, as above mentioned, five equal lines. We are now driven to make the almond, not (with the anatomists) a symbol of decay, but if possible something very desirable, which for the time has lost its charm: that is to say, we are driven to take it in its natural sense, for the early blossoming almond is the harbinger of spring. One of several illustrations which I gave in the *Dirge* (p. 33) is,

Dem Hoffnungstraum von schönerer Zeit,
 Der auf des Elends Stirn erglüht
 Die Mandelblüthe ist geweiht,
 Die an dem kahlen Zweige blüht.

In the time of mourning described in Eccl. xii., the

almond, the choicest flower of spring, loses its charm, and is not sought, but spurned.

In Wisdom ii. 7, we read, "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and let no *flower of the spring* pass by us." This book has been called Anti-Ecclesiastes, and has been thought—not without reason—to allude to and attempt to correct the teaching, or the apparent meaning of the teaching, of Ecclesiastes. Take as examples of parallels in the two books:—

Ecclesiastes.

i. 18. In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

iv. 2. I praised the dead which are already dead.

iii. 19. The sons of men are a chance, and the beasts are a chance . . . as the one dieth, so dieth the other: yea, they have all one breath.

Wisdom.

viii. 16. . . . her conversation hath no bitterness; and to live with her hath no sorrow, but mirth and joy.

i. 12. Seek not death in the error of your life.

ii. 1, 2. For they said, reasoning with themselves, but not aright . . . We are born at all adventure, etc. For the breath in our nostrils, etc.

The writer of Wisdom continues, "Which (breath) being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air [Eccl. xii. 7]. And no man shall have our works in remembrance [Eccl. ii. 16]. . . . Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth [Eccl. xi. 9]. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and *let no flower of the spring pass by us.*" This is so like an express allusion to the flower of spring, the almond, in the "Dirge," that it may be claimed as favouring our interpretation of *ויכניף השקר*, *the spring blossom is spurned*; whereas in Wisdom the heedless rejoicers, as in their youth, say: "Let us not spurn it; let its enjoyment not escape us."

"The grasshopper shall be a burden." Our argument from the parallelism requires that the *grasshopper* should,

like the almond blossom and the caperberry, be something desirable, which has lost its attractiveness. An obvious solution of this problem is that, if the Hebrew נבנ can possibly be taken in that sense, it is the τέρτιξ which is referred to, whose voice was much admired by the ancients. One of my illustrations was from Bar Hebræus, *On the Rose* :—

“ Lo ! Nisan hath come, and breathed consolation to the afflicted,
 And with flow'rets hath clothed hill and field in glory.
 At the nuptials of the rose it hath invited and gathered the flowers
 as guests,
 And prepared the way that the bridegroom may go forth from the
 chamber.
 Like brides, lo ! the flowers of the field are adorned,
 And have gotten deliverance from the strong bands of winter.
 Lo ! the tongue of the τέρτιξ is loosed and she ever sings,
 And on the βήματα of the narcissus and the myrtle pipes to the
 rose.”

Here the chirp of the τέρτιξ assumes prominence as a symbol of a time which brings consolation to the sad. Contrariwise, in Coheleth the mourners refuse to be comforted by the voice of the τέρτιξ. The possible objections which occur to me are—(1) that this delight in the song of τέρτιξ is Greek rather than Hebrew, and (2) that the Hebrew נבנ means ἀκρίς, *locust*, and not τέρτιξ. The answer to objection (2) is that the Greek poets, when the metre demands it, use ἀκρίς instead of τέρτιξ (*Dirge*, p. 37) ; and so the Preacher, in default of a special Hebrew word for that insect, may have used a word meaning *locust* in the required sense, when even the Greeks, who have the special word τέρτιξ, do not scruple to use ἀκρίς instead of it when it serves their purpose. Bar Hebræus, writing in Syriac, transliterates τέρτιξ, and of course the author of Ecclesiastes might have done the same ; but (to say nothing of a few exceptional and more or less disputed instances) it was not customary so to transliterate in the Biblical writings. The objection (1) is, briefly, that (whatever word be used) an allusion to the song of the τέρτιξ in the dirge-

passage would be of the nature of a Græcism; but this cannot be allowed to be decisive until a great controversy has been ended, and it has been agreed that there are absolutely no traces of Western thought in Coheleth.

The caperberry shall fail (R.V.). Compare Rev. xviii. 13, 14, "And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all." The pungent caperberry fails to please and stimulate the palate. This rendering, which properly belongs to the literal and semi-literal interpreters, has been appropriated by some of the anatomists, who, in various places, reject the Haggadic renderings. Delitzsch, while adopting what is really my view of the clause as his own, credits me with a comparison of the old man to a caperberry, "welche, überreif geworden, ihre Schale bricht und ihre Körner verstreut (Rosenm. Winer in R. W. Ew. Taylor u. A.), wie auch," etc. Did he mistake "palls" for *falls*? Nothing could be more appropriate to the occasion when "the mourners go about the streets" than the immediately preceding caperberry-clause, as I interpret it. "Turn ye unto me," writes the prophet, "with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." Fasting and mourning go naturally together, and this is poetically expressed by: "the caperberry fails, because . . . the mourners go about in the streets." It is added that the almond blossom, the glory of spring, and the song of the *τέριξ* also fail to please, so that there is a general failure of the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of sight, sound and taste. The whole passage was paraphrased in the preface to the *Dirge* :

"In that day the doorkeepers and the masters alike tremble: the maids cease from their work, and the mistresses from their amusements. Open house is not kept as heretofore, and the mill is no longer heard preparing food for the reveller: but the bird of evil omen raises his dirge, and the merry voice of the singing girl is silent. From

the house the scene now changes to the garden, or to the country at large. Here also terror encompasses the people. Lowering upon them from above and lurking at their feet, it deadens every sense: so that the almond-flower displeases, and the *τέρτιξ* sounds dull, and the caperberry palls: because the man passes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the street."

On this paraphrase I have only to remark again that the bird is not necessarily of evil omen in the strict sense; but may be merely a creature whose note, in accordance with Biblical analogy, is a fit accompaniment to the stroke of death.

The cessation of grinding, and the shutting of the street door, go naturally together, as explained above; but to the anatomists this hemistich is a source of great embarrassment. The Revised Version cuts it in two by an arbitrary punctuation different from that of the Hebrew, and thus (in effect) connects "the doors shall be shut to the street" with verse 3, leaving for the first hemistich of the next verse, "When the sound of the grinding is low," and destroying the rhythm of both verses.

In reply to Dr. Cheyne's observation (if I understand it) that there seems to be no assignable reason for separating "these verses," or the parts of them which make the "dirge," from their context (p. 533), I can say that I find it quite easy to assign a motive, which I shall venture to consider valid until reason has been shown to the contrary. In the passage as printed above (p. 534), the words in italics belong merely to the framework, and the intermediate clauses (as even the allegorists allow) are "strongly poetic in colouring." Whether we interpret them literally or anatomically, they are so unlike anything else in the book that they *may*, it is fair to think, have been not composed but quoted by the writer, who, in the course of his reflections, brings before us so many thoughts not altogether his own; and as a modern preacher might say in his own words, *In that day*, and then go on to quote words of

Scripture, as "The keepers of the house shall tremble," etc., so the author of Coheleth might have written, "In the day when [as it is said] *The keepers of the house shall tremble*, etc., and when [as it is said in another place] *They shall be afraid of that which is high*," etc. The poetic effect of the passage is heightened, I think, by its approximately metrical character. But, to lay no great stress upon this, the substance of the description is made to stand out in such a way from its context by frame-words, and its diction is so poetical, however we understand, or half understand it, that the passage may very well consist of snatches of song, quoted, whether from a "book" or not, by Coheleth. But all this is equally true or false, whether the passage be a "dirge" or an anatomy. In a word, the Dirge-book theory is no part of the Dirge theory.

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(To be continued.)
